

KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws editor at drABC26@aol.com. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of the issue.

The Mysterious Bigrams of the OPA

FDR established the OPA during WWII in order to ration food in the USA. To implement the rationing, the OPA (Office of Price Administration) allotted everyone in the country a certain number of ration tokens each month. The tokens, smaller than a dime, were made of fiber. They came in either of two colors, blue or red. They had no cash value, but simply indicated to the grocer that the customer was allowed to buy a certain amount of a specific type of food. To buy a pound of hamburger, for example, the customer might have to pay 50 cents plus one red token. No token, no burger. The tokens were made and distributed until the end of the war.

The tokens were masterpieces of minimalism—words only, except for two asterisks that separated the words. Both sides had the same wording in incuse sans serif capital letters: OPA * RED POINT * (or OPA * BLUE POINT *) around the circumference, and in the center the number 1 with two tiny letters of the alphabet, one on each side of the 1. I read an article a couple of years ago that said no one knows what the letters signify.

People now try to collect sets of OPA tokens, one for each bigram. Compared to most other tokens, they are abundant and cheap. Almost every red token can be bought for ten cents or less; the blues might soar to 25 cents. It is very easy to assemble a set of reds for less than five dollars, except for one catch. The last token issued, the red MV, is more than a million times rarer than any of the others, which were issued in the billions. The OPA send out only 800 MVs, and then were ordered to stop because the war ended. Any remaining MVs were destroyed. Recently, two MVs sold for \$390 apiece at auction! Assembling a complete set of OPA tokens is like putting together a necklace composed of the Hope Diamond and 29 glass duplicates.

Why did the government use bigrams, and why these bigrams in particular? Some people suggest they were code letters representing the dates of issue or the areas of distribution. The blue and red tokens collectively use (nearly) all of the 49 possible bigram combinations of CHTUVXY, as shown in the table below (first letter of bigram down the left, second letter along the top):

	C	H	T	U	V	X	Y
C	b	b	b			b	b
H	r	b	r	b	b	b	b
T	b	r	b	b	b	b	r
U	r	r	r	b	r	r	r
V	r	r	r	r	b	r	r
X	r	r	r	r	r	b	r
Y	r	r	r	r	r	r	b

Why didn't the OPA use bigrams CU and CY? Instead, they issued new sets of blue tokens labeled WC, WH, WT, WU and WY, and red tokens labeled MM and MV.

It seems as if the government was trying to pick bigrams that can't be combined to make common words—I could only find TUT-TUT. Other logological questions: Can you find other words that combine two or more OPA bigrams? What if bigrams are allowed to overlap? Or if CU and CY can also be used? What are the most OPA bigrams that you can find in a single word (allowing extra letters)?

Weekday Names

Some people are named after the days of the week. The weekday name can appear as a first name, a last name, a nickname, etc. Here is a list containing two first names, three last names, and one nickname. Can you add to the list of people with weekday names/ Does anyone, real or fictional, famous or unknown, have two different weekday names (e.g. Friday Wednesday), or three? How about special days as names, such as Judy Holiday? Of course, the ultimate show-stopper would be someone with all seven weekday names, five used as middle names, in correct order.

Rick Monday, a baseball player on the Kansas City Athletics in the 1960s

Tuesday Weld, an actress on *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*

Wednesday Addams, the daughter in *The Addams Family* cartoon by Charles Addams

Joe Friday, the Los Angeles cop in the TV series *Dragnet*

Friday, Robinson Crusoe's island friend in the novel by Daniel DeFoe

Billy Sunday, the traveling preacher of the early 20th century

Divisible Words

Chris McManus sent the following two kinds of words whose letters have a certain arithmetic pattern. In ARCHER, EDITOR, PROPEL and STUPOR, the first letter's alphabetic value (A=1, B=2,...) is divisible by one, the second by 2, the third by 3, and so on. In GROPING and HURLING, the last letter's alphabetic value is divisible by one, the second-to-last by 2, the third-to-last by 3, etc. He notes that a lot of words of length 6 fit the first pattern.

Alternating Odd And Even Letters

Chris also sent a selection of words whose letters occupy alternating odd and even positions in the alphabet. In the first case, odd letters appear in odd positions and even in even positions; the only long example he sent is OVERELABORATED. In the second case, odd letters appear in even positions and even in odd: DELIBERATIVELY, DENATURALIZING, HETEROLITERALS, NONINSTINCTIVE, REHABILITATIVE, VITUPERATIVELY.

Extremely Simple Challenge Answered

In the February 2002 *Kickshaws*, the "Extremely Simple Challenge" asked for the longest word or phrase that has an equal number of consonants and vowels. Susan Thorpe sent two words, both of which are inferred from URETEROILEONEOCYSTOSTOMY, listed in *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. More intriguingly, she sent three phrases:

URETEROILEONEOCYSTOSTOMIZE (13 of each)

URETEROILEONEOCYSTOSTOMIES (13)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (14)
 HEAR NO EVIL, SEE NO EVIL, SPEAK NO EVIL (15),
 TO GO IN AT ONE EAR AND OUT AT THE OTHER (15)

Rex Gooch came up with another set of answers. Incredibly, he found the Stedman word plus the following:

CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NATIONAL RECREATIONAL AREA (longest, at 20 of each)
 JACOBIAN ELLIPSOID OF EQUILIBRIUM (15) OED
 POLLAIUOLESQUE-BOTTICELLESQUE (14) OED Botticellian 1939,
 AEGIRITE-AKERMANTITE-MICROCLINE (14) OED innelite 1963
 RADIOIMMUNOPRECIPITATION (12) OED

If Y is considered to be a vowel, then the longest are:

INTERNATIONAL ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION (16) Bloomsbury and others
 ENCEPHALOMYELORADICULONEURITIS (15) Stedman
 HONORIFICABILITUDINITY (11) OED, DEOXYRIBONUCLEOPROTEIN (11) OED,
 PALAEOCLIMATOLOGICALLY (11) OED palaeoclimatology 1966,
 POLIOENCEPHALOMYELITIS (11) Web 2, PSEUDOMONOCOTYLEDONOUS (11)
 OED pseudo- 1832

Finally, Darryl Francis weighed in with:

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (14)
 LINEAR DIFFERENTIAL EQUATION (13)
 HONORIFICABILITUDINITIES (12)
 COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES (11), DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION (11),
 REINSTITUTIONALIZATION (11)

Out of curiosity, I counted the vowels and consonants in Milton's *Paradise Lost* one night, and there were 189,412 of each. If you don't believe me, count them yourself!

Most Musical Composer of All

Last issue, several musical terms and musicians were listed because they are spelled with (or without) the musical letters A to G. Dmitri Borgmann defined piano words as words spelled with those letters and no others. The only word in the previous Kickshaws that would qualify as a piano word is DEAF. Rex Gooch sent an email in which he pointed out that "B-A-C-H are the musical notes which form the basis of one of the best-known of J.S. Bach's works. Germany is where the modern system of keys was invented (by guess who...in the Well-Tempered Klavier), and H is a musical note."

Permutations, Transpositions, Anagrams

Regarding the complex question of what to call a rearrangement of letters in one text to form another text, Rex writes the following:

I'm so glad you raised the issue of permutations/transpositions/anagrams. The maturity of a subject is shown by the availability of agreed definitions, without which communication, let alone progress, is very difficult. If we take CAB, we can have six different orders of the letters. This is the

efficiently by Pascal and others a long time ago (while investigating the odds in gambling), and the different orders of the letters are known as **permutations**. When some of the letters are the same, as with BAB, we have to refine our ideas, and talk of **combinations**, and there are just three. The advantages of using this terminology is that the definitions are firm, and formulae are readily available. A nice friendly terminology is **(re)arrangements**, which, however, may leave the reader asking what happens if some of the symbols are the same. In English, **transposal** is a rarer term than **transposition**, but means the same. I am unhappy with using either because they literally mean “placing across,” which much more aptly describes its use in the kind of work I used to do, when trying to correct automatically (e.g.) a single pair of letters swapped when a mis-type happens. So far as logological tradition is concerned, Borgmann uses all the above terms on the same page (Chapter 2, *Language on Vacation*), with rearrangement being frequent, and Ross Eckler defines transposition by using the word rearrangement (*Making the Alphabet Dance*). So it seems clear that accurate work should use **combinations**, and less formal work can use **rearrangements**. If you want a shorter word, then I recommend **ravel**, but the reason is a little outré.

I know that many people find it helpful to distinguish between arrangements which have no meaning as a word, those which are words, and those which are apt words. Borgmann defines **anagram** as an apt rearrangement, Bergerson’s anagrams in *Palindromes and Anagrams* are all apt, and Ross Eckler uses it in this sense. Why create problems?

Segway Human Transporter

Mike Morton comments on the new mode of transportation called the Segway Human Transporter:” Until Dean Kamen showed his high-tech scooter, there were few good anagrams (you can’t do much with ‘It’ or ‘Ginger’). Now that it’s been christened, though...”

Here are the top ten anagrams for Segway Human Transporter, followed by the ten runners-up and ten dishonorable mentions:

Progress: Men run thataway
Warn U.S.: “Rather empty. No gas!”
Thwart Osama; spurn energy
May shatter near grown-ups
Grasp mast to run anywhere

Answer-guy on the ramparts
Errant Tom Sawyer hangs up
Humans try a strange power
Now, harness up “gray matter”
We get aroun’, Mrs. Pantyrash!

A parent’s shotgun! We marry!
Emperor’s warty anus-thang
Human progeny: E.T., Star Wars
Postwar U.S.? Hey, Ann-Margret!
Swan song? Pure myth! Errata!

Granny’s a treasure (two mph!)
Hungry sans watt or ampere
Wary U.S. postman: “Three gran’??”
Parts ran! Growth may ensue!
Unary passenger...wham! Tort! [the best anagram]

Apathy grows as men return
Harry Potter was snug (amen!)
Many grown-ups stare at her!
Patent new orgasms? Hurray!
Worst anagram: “Runty sheep”

Any Grape Nuts? Earthworms?
Harry Truman wasn’t GOP, see?
Men saw Pythagoras return
R.W. Emerson’s apathy: a grunt
Ugh! Answer me, nasty parrot!

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Phonetic Digits

One day I received an email from Mike Morton that began “We’ve all heard phone operators read confirmation numbers : M as in Mary, J as in John... How about for digits?” Mike suggested

"1 as in wonderful, 2 as in Teutonic, 3 as in threonine, 4 as in forbidden, 8 as in atemporal." I replied by suggesting that you could use words that are opposites of words that sound like the original numbers:

ONE as opposed to 'lost'
TWO as opposed to 'fro'
THREE as opposed to 'bush'
FOUR as opposed to 'aft'
FIVE as opposed to 'f you've'

SIX as opposed to 'well'
SEVEN as opposed to 's Hell'
EIGHT as opposed to 'drank'
NINE as opposed to 'yours'
ZERO as opposed to Beetle Bailey

Another possibility is using numeric synonyms or words that immediately suggest a number. The challenge is to pick from a different category for each digit.

ONE as in ace
THREE as in triplets
FIVE as in quintet
SEVEN as in lucky number
NINE as in baseball team

TWO as in snake-eyes
FOUR as in quarters
SIX as in half dozen
EIGHT as in octave
ZERO as in love

It's unfortunate that 5 and 9 are the ones most needing confirmation, since they sound most alike over a fuzzy phone connection. Aviation people, who routinely read off numbers to each other, solve the 5-9 problem by pronouncing the latter 'niner.'

Polyanagram on Bin Laden

The US and Australia were united recently in the events following the World Trade Center tragedy. Each country discovered that one of its citizens had been a member of the Taliban, the Islamic fundamentalist group who had taken over Afghanistan, thanks to funding by Osama bin Laden, wanted by the FBI for sponsoring the September 11 massacre. A few wordplay items on bin Laden have appeared in previous issues of Word Ways. From Australia, Anil writes "I don't normally engage in topical anagrams but couldn't resist the following prejudgment of recent astounding events—an 18er polyanagram on the prime suspect's name:

Bin Laden led in nab-Line band belandin' laden bin in a "blend" in a blend-land bien? (Bad linen, bad Lenin an' blind E bid lean 'n' bend?) Nail nil'd bane an' end lib—"n' end bail!" Bend nail, end lib an'd 'nil' bane!"

Translation: Did bin Laden plan or back that suicide gang's rob-an-airline 'landing' of fully-laden plane(s) into and homogenizing of the top 'goods' of a good [*bien* (Fr.) = good] melting-pot land? (Was it his funny clothes, perverse Marxism and/or blind faith energy that perverted him?) "Jail this 'nothinged' bane and throw away the key!" say those of us who don't believe in capital punishment. "Crucify him! Annihilate him!" say others.

Anagram on Taliban

Darryl Francis notes that TALIBAN can be transposed to TABLINA, the plural of TABLINUM, in the OED. A tablinum is an apartment or recess in an ancient Roman house, opening out of the atrium opposite the principal entrance, and containing the family archives, statues, etc. Darryl also discovered that TALEBAN, an alternative spelling, can be transposed to BALANTE, a Sudanese Negro people of French Senegal and Angola, found in Webster's Third.

The Contronym Connection

Anil sent the following four forced contronyms and a fifth that is an anagrammatic exposition of an old contronym. (A contronym, as many of you know, is a word that has opposite meanings.)

APPEAL *vb* (or *n.*), (1) please attract, (2) dislike, oppose, challenge in higher court

THROTTLE *vb* v. *n.*, (1) to choke, stop, (2) a choke, starter aid, fuel enricher.

THROUGH (1) past, finished, (2) present, in process, in the midst of, with, via

VERSUS (1) opposition, (2) sameness, "in other words"

SANCTION (1) is "non-act," (2) in "act's on"

Cheater's Anagrams

According to Peter Newby, cheater's anagrams "fall into one of two categories: (a) Borgmannisms, and (b) 'fabulisms.' Consider the word BELFAST. A Borgmannist would strain the limits of grammatical tolerance and argue that the archaic verb 'to tell lies,' FABLE, may once have had the inflection FABLEST. By contrast, fabulists would construct FABLETS and define them as (say) 'mindlessly aggressive Ulster fairies.' How legitimate is either word? Kickshaws interviewed the topical jurist Peter Newby, who has published both his Aldhelm Word Rules in extensive detail and made passing reference to Granny Rules in his *Mammoth Book of Word Games*. In effect, Aldhelm Rules constitute mainstream attitudes to word legitimacy whereas Granny Rules can be defined as 'subversive judgments by matriarchal word game umpires in favor of grandchildren.'

"FABLEST," opined the sage, "may well find acceptance in logological circles, but would *not* be tolerated in competitive linguistic sport. A grandchild, however, who can quote the source of FABLETS would have umpiring-Granny ruling in his or her favour."

A Cheater's Anagram makes its debut in...the...

Prose Poser

Was BELFAST built by disorderly FABLETS?

Do you get TEATS out of STATE?

Is JANE a modified JEAN?

DIET—is it influenced by the turn of the TIDE?

Do anagrammatists make GARNETS STRANGE?

Charade Poseur

"Darby Belsire, the rhyming couplet laureate," Peter writes, "wishes to pioneer a rival to the prose poser, basically an incomplete charade which attempts simultaneous sense in both readings, however tricky. Here is his solitary contribution to the genre: Are pikemen the subjects of STAND OF FISH aggression?"

Of Palindromes And Pubs

One of the nicest things about Word Ways is that it serves as a meeting place where people from the wordplay side of town can congregate and get to know each other without getting busted for loitering or lettering. And one way to get to know each other is through palindromes. Jim Puder writes, "I've seen your name transposed every which way in Kickshaws, and used in word

squares, but has anyone ever set your full name in a palindrome? No? Okay, here's the late Sir Alec Guinness in a pub, explaining to a gypsy acquaintance that since he's become a knight, he feels he ought to be more particular than formerly about the company he keeps:

Regal as Sir Alec, I, Rom, evade Dave Morice...Larissa, lager!

He was referring, of course, to the London Dave Morice, a notorious underworld figure. Both you and editor

Ross Eckler (a "tsar of rums," a "Smurf," or a star elk-cessor?)

are exceptional in that decent palindromes can be made from your first and last names together."

I tried plugging Jim's full name into a decent palindrome, and it worked in spite of the difficult letter J. Imagine a musician about to strike up Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" on a steam calliope by first heating up the musical note "E" on the M1-pipe. He's not sure if the "Ode" is considered to be a tune, so he asks Jim's opinion:

Sit! I fired up mi. "Joy" a song? No? Say, O Jim Puder, if it is

Shared Transadditions by the Numbers

Numerically speaking, there are many wordplay stones still unturned. Jim has turned up the following stone: "Ross, Rex Gooch and others have worked to identify transposals or transadditions of the number names from ONE to ONE HUNDRED. A variation on that theme involves searching for transadditions that are shared by neighboring number names. For example, ZERO and ONE share REZONE, ONE and TWO share WONTED, and so on." I particularly like the TEEN word below. It could replace TWELVE and give some sparkle to the number system: TEN, ELEVEN, VELVETEEN, THIRTEEN, etc. Then one could say "It's velveteen o'clock, time for lunch!"

0,1 ZONER*	4,5 UNFORGIVEN*	8,9 TRENCHING
1,2 NEWTON	5,6 FIXATIVES	9,10 TENNIS
2,3 WHERE TO	6,7 EXTROVERSION	10,11 VELVETEEN
3,4 FURTHERMORE	7,8 OVERNIGHTERS	11,12 OVERWHELMINGEST *

The asterisked examples are inferred inflections not listed in Webster's Third.

Shared Figure Skating Transadditions

Speaking of shared transadditions," Jim adds, "do you suppose that SARAH Hughes and SASHA Cohen will now HARASS each other in figure skating over the next few years? I'd certainly hope not: **Ah, sass Sarah never, or even harass Sasha!**"

Questionable Name

"On a different note," Mike Morton writes, "I emailed my friend A.J. Koester yesterday. Her email is "ajkoester@". What can you do with "ajkoester"?"

Mathematical Chicken Soup for the Soul

How to make a mathematical acronym out of a single mathematical word: just throw together a few mathematical terms to correspond with the letters of the original word and you wind up with mathematical chicken soup for the soul.

PI Positive Integer

TEN Transcendental Even Number

SUM Set of Undefined Members

FIVE Formulaic Increment of Vector Edges

ZERO Zeno's Exact Random Order

SINE Summation, Integration and Negation Equation

COSINE Consummation Operator for a Summation, Integration and Negation Equation

BOOLEAN Banded Optimal Operation Locating Equivalent Algebraic Numbers

ALGEBRA Axiom of Linear Geometry Equaling Boolean Repetitive Addition

CIRCLE Comically Inflated Rotational Curve of Linear Elements

ELEVEN Equality Leaves Equal Vectors Evenly Negated

The Prodigal Son in the Key of F

Paul Eckler, a friend of the editor's, found the following clever parody on the Internet:

Feeling footloose and frisky, a feather-brained fellow

Forced his fond father to fork over the farthings,

And flew far to foreign fields

And fabulously frittered his fortune with faithless friends.

Fleeced by his fellows in folly, and facing famine,

He found himself a feed-flinger in a filthy farmyard.

Fairly famishing, he fain would've filled his frame

With foraged food from fodder fragments.

"Fooey, my father's flunkies fare far finer."

The frazzled fugitive forlornly fumbled, frankly facing facts.

Frustrated by failure, and filled with foreboding,

He fled forthwith to his family.

Falling at this father's feet, he forlornly fumbled, "Father, I've flunked,

And fruitlessly forfeited family fellowship favor."

The far-sighted father, forestalling further flinching,

Frantically flagged the flunkies.

"Fetch a fatling from the flock and fix a feast."

The fugitive's fault-finding brother frowned

On fickle forgiveness of former folderol.

But the faithful father figured,

"Filial fidelity is fine, but the fugitive is found!

What forbids fervent festivity?

Let flags be unfurled! Let fanfares flare!"

Father's forgiveness formed the foundation

For the former fugitive's future fortitude!